



Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



فرمان رسول ﷺ
کہا ہے سے قہار نے بیان کیا ان سے اس بن
مالک رضی اللہ عنہ بیان کیا کہ رسول اللہ
صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم نے فرمایا اللہ تعالیٰ اپنے
بندے کی قوم سے تمہیں سے اس شخص سے
بھی زیادہ خوش ہو تا ہے جس کا وضو پاویں
کے بعد اپنا کھانسی لے لیا ہو ورنہ وہ ایک
پھیل میدان میں گم ہو ا تھا۔
(کنز الدقائق: حدیث نمبر 6309)
**Barkat Rice Mills
(Pvt) Limited**



Syrian foreign minister to visit Pakistan for bilateral talks

Syrian Foreign Minister Saad Hassan Al-Shaibani will pay an official visit to Pakistan from August 19 to 20 at the invitation of DPM/ Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, the Foreign Office said. According to a Foreign Office spokesperson, the Syrian foreign minister will be accompanied by a high-level official delegation during the visit.



Talal Chaudhry says govt will continue consulting Bilawal on national issues

PML-N leader Talal Chaudhry has said PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari remains an important government ally and will continue to be consulted on legislation and national issues despite political differences. Chaudhry described Bilawal as a young and emotional political leader, saying his reaction was linked to election results.

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Rabi-ul-Awwal 6, Thursday, August 20, 2026

www.dailyspokesman.net

@daily_spokesman



Daily Spokesman Vol: 20, Issue: 121 Price Rs. 25.00 Pages 8

Meeting

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari meeting Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti at Aiwan-e-Sadr. PPP Women's Wing President Ms Faryal Talpur and former Balochistan minister Mir Ali Hassan Zehri also present.



Photo: PID

Attempts to impede Balochistan development to be foiled at all costs: President

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday vowed that the attempts by the foreign-sponsored terrorists to obstruct the progress and prosperity of Balochistan would be foiled at all costs.

The president, in a meeting with Chief Minister of Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti, who called on him at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, expressed confidence that terrorism would soon be completely eradicated from Balochistan.

During the meeting, Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti briefed the president on the overall situation in Balochistan and the ongoing development

initiatives across the province.

President Zardari emphasized that effective coordination between federal and provincial governments was essential for maintaining peace, accelerating development, and ensuring public welfare in Balochistan.

He said that as the country's largest province by area, Balochistan deserved special attention and adequate resources.

The meeting was also attended by the Central President of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Women Wing Faryal Talpur, and former provincial minister Mir Ali Hassan Zehri.

Govt moves to develop national private equity policy framework



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb chaired the first meeting of a committee constituted by the Prime Minister to develop a National Private Equity Policy Framework aimed at strengthening Pakistan's private equity ecosystem and attracting greater domestic and international long-term investment.

The meeting discussed the potential of private equity to provide growth capital to emerging and priority sectors, support business expansion, improve productivity and enhance the competitiveness of Pakistani companies. The Finance Minister stressed that the framework should be private-sector-led, with the government focused on creating regulatory clarity, improving ease of doing business and addressing taxation and policy

barriers. The committee reviewed the existing private equity environment and considered measures for supportive taxation and regulation, including appropriate treatment of private equity funds and greater flexibility for long-term investment and reinvestment.

It also discussed greater participation by institutional investors and the role of private equity in mergers and acquisitions, restructuring, privatisation and other long-term investment opportunities.

Senator Aurangzeb emphasized the need for a strong pipeline of bankable business plans and investable projects to attract investors. Four workstreams will focus on taxation, regulation, business strategy and identifying bankable projects. Their recommendations will be consolidated into the National Private Equity Policy Framework for submission to the Prime Minister.

Federal cabinet to consider increase in petrol, diesel dealer margins today

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has summoned an important meeting of the federal cabinet on Thursday, with a proposed increase in the dealer margins on petrol and diesel among the key items on the agenda, sources said.

According to sources, the cabinet will consider approval for a 15.51 percent increase in the dealer margin on petrol and diesel. The decision taken by the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) on August 14 will be presented before the



federal cabinet for approval.

Sources said the proposed increase would raise the dealer margin on petrol by Rs1.34 per litre, while a similar increase of Rs1.34 per litre is expected for diesel. The proposed increase would add Rs2.68 per litre to the prices of petrol and diesel, putting an additional burden on consumers.

Following the proposed increase, the dealer margin would rise from the existing Rs8.64 per litre to Rs9.98 per litre for both petrol and diesel, sources said. The cabinet meeting will also review the country's overall

economic, political and security situation.

Sources said the regional situation and the prevailing law and order situation would also come under discussion. Various decisions taken by cabinet committees are expected to be presented before the federal cabinet for ratification.

The meeting will be held at 10:30am on Thursday at the Prime Minister's House, according to sources.

The Cabinet Division has informed members of the federal cabinet about the scheduled meeting and its agenda.

Pakistan protests US Ambassador's remarks on Kashmir

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has lodged a strong protest with the United States over remarks by US Ambassador to India Sergio Gorrer regarding the status of Jammu and Kashmir. The Foreign Office summoned US Chargé d'Affaires Natalie A. Baker on Wednesday to formally convey Islamabad's concerns.

According to the Foreign Office

spokesperson, Pakistan strongly condemned and categorically rejected the ambassador's description of Jammu and Kashmir as "part of India." The Foreign Office reiterated Pakistan's position that the region is an internationally recognized disputed territory, whose final status must be determined in accordance with relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the wishes of the Kashmiri people.

Islamabad said the ambassador's remarks were inconsistent with the longstanding, documented US position on the dispute and contrary to Washington's stated commitment to international law and the UN Charter. Pakistan also recalled that the US had previously welcomed President Donald Trump's offer to mediate the Kashmir dispute between Pakistan and India following their recent conflict.



Islamabad urged Washington to ensure its public statements remain consistent with the disputed status of Jammu and Kashmir under international law. The development comes amid

ongoing tensions between Pakistan and India over the region, with Islamabad continuing to insist on a resolution based on UN resolutions and Kashmiri aspirations.

Bilawal says PPP will support new provinces only after consensus is reached

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said on Wednesday his party would stand by the decision of the people regarding the creation of new provinces, stressing that any such move

should be based on consensus.

Addressing the issue of new provinces, Bilawal said the PPP was not opposed to the creation of new provinces but believed that decisions on the matter should be taken through consensus. "Where there is consensus, the decision should be made by consensus," he

said, adding that where there was no consensus, political parties should sit together and discuss the issue.

Bilawal said no proposal regarding new provinces had so far been presented to the PPP. If any proposal or constitutional amendment came before the

party, it would be considered in the national interest, he added. He said the PPP had not accepted decisions imposed by force in the past and would not accept such decisions in the future.

Bilawal said everyone was aware of the PPP's position on the creation of new provinces

in Sindh, adding that the party would respect the opinion of the people. He noted that there was already consensus on the creation of a South Punjab province and reiterated that provinces should not be created in areas where there was no agreement among stakeholders.

Govt challenges SC order to move Imran Khan to hospital

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has filed a review petition in the Supreme Court against its order directing the transfer of jailed former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan to Shifa International Hospital in Islamabad.

According to the TV channel, the government has asked the court to withdraw the order, arguing that the decision overlooked jail rules and contained legal shortcomings.

In its petition, the government said Article 10-A of the Constitution guarantees a fair trial. It argued that the order had been issued without notices being served on the relevant parties and without giving

them an opportunity to present their position.

The government also said serious legal questions about whether the case was maintainable had not been properly considered and that the court had issued a one-sided interim order.

It further argued that final relief could not be granted at the interim stage of proceedings.

The petition challenges the Supreme Court's order of 18 August directing authorities to move Imran Khan from Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi to Shifa International Hospital in Islamabad within two days for medical examination and treatment. The court also ordered access to his personal physician and greater contact with his family.

Punjab launches Seerat-un-Nabi ﷺ Conferences across province

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Secretary/Chief Administrator Auqaf Punjab Dr. Ehsan Bhutta said Rabi-ul-Awwal is a sacred month of love for the Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad Mustafa ﷺ, devotion, mercy and spiritual blessings, adding that the Punjab government is marking it with reverence and a strong commitment to spreading the teachings of Seerat-e-Tayyaba. Under the leadership of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif and Chief Secretary Zahid Akhtar Zaman, the Auqaf & Religious Affairs Department has launched a province-wide series of Seerat-un-Nabi ﷺ conferences, beginning in Faisalabad.

Speaking at a high-level meeting attended by DG Auqaf Hafiz Anees Ur Rehman, Additional Secretary Nabeela Javed, Director Administration Shakir



Sandhu, and other officials, Dr. Bhutta said the divisional-level conferences will bring together Ulema, Qaris, public representatives, commissioners,

DPOs, and other prominent figures. He listed the schedule: Faisalabad on August 19; Gujranwala and Sargodha on August 20; Pakpattan on August

21; Multan and Bahawalpur on August 22; and Rawalpindi and Dera Ghazi Khan on August 24. The concluding ceremony, featuring provincial-level Seerat-un-Nabi ﷺ competitions, will be held at Seerat-un-Nabi ﷺ University, Lahore, on August 25 (11 Rabi-ul-Awwal), with CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif expected as chief guest.

Dr. Bhutta described the Holy Prophet ﷺ as the ultimate embodiment of mercy, compassion, justice and moral excellence, saying his teachings offer practical guidance for contemporary challenges. He stressed that true success lies in embodying these teachings in daily conduct rather than through ceremonies alone, and said the month's programmes would help inspire youth, deepen their connection to the Prophet's ﷺ life, and promote compassion, tolerance, integrity and brotherhood.

Holy Prophet ﷺ Is a Great Blessing from Allah and a Mercy for All Humanity: Syed Riaz Hussain Shah

City Desk

RAWALPINDI: A spiritually uplifting gathering of Zikr and Quranic teachings was held at Idara Taleemat-e-Islamia, Khayaban-e-Sir Syed, under the patronage of renowned religious scholar Allama Syed Riaz Hussain Shah. Allama Hafiz Sheikh Muhammad Qasim conducted the proceedings. The gathering featured a special lecture on the blessed birth of the Holy Prophet Hazrat



Muhammad Mustafa ﷺ, his Seerah, exalted status and virtues, and the importance of love for the Prophet ﷺ. The speaker highlighted the blessed signs preceding the birth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and narrated accounts related to the blessed dreams of Hazrat Amina (RA), emphasizing the significance of love and devotion to the Prophet ﷺ. Addressing the gathering, Syed Riaz Hussain Shah, in the light of verses from the Holy Quran, said that the noble personality of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is a great blessing from Allah Almighty and a mercy for all humanity. He urged the participants to make the Seerah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ a practical model for their lives, strengthen their connection with the Quran and Sunnah, and promote love, brotherhood, good character and Islamic values in society. The gathering concluded with a special prayer for the safety and prosperity of the country and nation, unity and solidarity among the Muslim Ummah, and the ability to develop true love for and follow the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

PML-N Issues Tickets for Technocrat, Overseas and Women's Reserved Seats in AJK

Abdul Majeed Tahir

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has issued party tickets for reserved seats in Azad Jammu and Kashmir.



Former Minister Syed Iftikhar Gilani has been awarded the ticket for the technocrat seat, while Abdul Rehman Arain has been nominated for the overseas seat.

For the women's reserved seats, PML-N has issued tickets to Ms. Riffat Abid (Dadyal), Maryam Idrees (Mirpur), Maryam Kashmiri (Muzaffarabad), and Sehrish Qamar (Poonch).

The nominations are part of the party's arrangements for the upcoming formation of the AJK legislative setup.

Political Differences Should Not Undermine Fundamental Rights: Dr Muzammil

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Markazi Muslim League (PMML) spokesperson Dr Muzammil Iqbal Hashmi has urged the government to ensure that political differences do not undermine fundamental rights or humanitarian considerations. Referring to the health and medical treatment of PTI founder Imran Khan, he said his medical report had been submitted to the Supreme Court and the court had made its decision on the basis of that report.

Dr Hashmi called on authorities to distinguish between political opposition and fundamental rights and avoid any unfair approach toward Imran Khan's health and treatment. He said PMML supports ethical and responsible political conduct and has long advocated a Grand National Dialogue to address Pakistan's political and economic challenges.

He said the country's political crisis had worsened due to efforts to suppress opponents by those in power and opposition parties' focus on regaining power. He urged political forces to rise above partisan interests, end hatred and confrontation, and promote national unity, tolerance, reconciliation and an end to political victimisation.

PCJCCI Facilitates B2B Meeting on Children's Diaper Industry

Commerce Desk

The Pakistan China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI) organized a B2B meeting between Chinese and Pakistani businesspeople to explore investment, technology transfer, and joint ventures in Pakistan's children's diaper manufacturing sector, bringing together Chinese manufacturers, technology providers, and investors with Pakistani businessmen.

Commercial Ambassador Adeel Munawar said the sector holds strong investment potential given Pakistan's large population and growing hygiene awareness among parents. He said the meeting aimed to convert market potential into practical partnerships, with Chinese firms offering machinery and production expertise while Pakistani partners contribute market knowledge and distribution networks. He stressed developing a full local supply chain — covering packaging, absorbent materials, and non-woven fabrics — to boost value addition and cost competitiveness.

Chinese representative Ye Guan Quan expressed strong interest in Pakistan's baby-care market, saying Chinese companies aim to pursue local manufacturing and joint investment rather than just product supply, introducing modern technology to produce affordable, quality diapers.

Discussions covered production capacity, machinery, raw materials, packaging, pricing, and manufacturing diapers for newborn, infant, and toddler categories. Munawar said such cooperation could position Pakistan as a regional manufacturing hub for baby-care products, serving both domestic and export markets, while strengthening Pakistan-China private-sector ties.

Protest

KARACHI: Activists of Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan (JI) Women Wing hold placards during sit-in against increased petroleum levy, rising fuel prices and inflation, in the Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

IPP President Abdul Aleem Khan Stresses Tourism, Development in GB

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) President Abdul Aleem Khan held a meeting with party leaders and Members of the Assemblies from Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir, including former GB Governor Raja Jalal Hussain Maqpoon, Imam Malik, Haji Gulbar Khan, Shams Lone, and Sardar Tabarak Ali, alongside IPP Secretary General Mian Khalid Mahmood and Punjab President Rana Nazeer Ahmed Khan.

The meeting reviewed the recent government formation in Gilgit-Baltistan and the political situation following elections in Azad Kashmir, along with the party's future strategy and regional development plans. It was noted that IPP had secured key portfolios in the GB government, including Education, Food, Industries, Water and Power, Prisons, Agriculture, and Home Affairs.

Abdul Aleem Khan said Gilgit-Baltistan and the Northern Areas possess abundant natural beauty and resources, requiring only the right direction, effective



policies, and sustained effort to develop. He highlighted significant untapped potential in key sectors, particularly tourism, saying sound policies and improved governance could make the region economically self-reliant.

He directed IPP ministers to work

tirelessly to ensure people receive tangible benefits from government initiatives, prioritizing resolution of public grievances, provision of basic facilities, and visible development progress. He urged efforts to discourage despair and instead convey hope for a brighter future, stressing that government office

should be treated as a means of public service and that public trust must be earned through practical action.

The meeting concluded with a shared resolve that IPP would continue playing an active role in promoting welfare, development, and prosperity across Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir.

Another brave son of Attock sacrifices his life for the nation

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: Another brave son of Attock has laid down his life for the motherland. Young soldier Malik Mubashir, a resident of Bhal Syedan, embraced martyrdom while bravely fighting terrorists in Noshki, Balochistan.

Candidate for the Provincial Assembly constituency PP-4, Malik Amanat Khan Rawal, attended the funeral prayer of Shaheed Malik Mubashir and

expressed his heartfelt condolences and sympathy to the bereaved family.

Speaking on the occasion, Malik Amanat Khan Rawal said that brave young men like Malik Mubashir are national heroes who sacrificed their lives for the security, sovereignty and peace of the country. The soldiers of the Pakistan Armed Forces are standing on the front line against terrorism without caring for their own lives. The

entire nation stands united with its brave armed forces and will always remember and honour the everlasting sacrifices of the martyrs.

He said, "The death of a martyr is the life of a nation."

Malik Amanat Khan Rawal prayed that Allah Almighty elevate the ranks of Shaheed Malik Mubashir, grant him the highest place in Jannat-ul-Firdous, and bless the bereaved family with patience and fortitude. Ameen.





Islamabad

30° – 38° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr 4:03 am
Zohr 12:12 pm
Asr 4:55 pm
Maghrib 6:50 pm
Isha 8:19 pm

EMERGENCY

Rescue (Police) 15
Bomb Disposal 15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/
Islamabad 1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance 1122 &
& Rescue Services 4451122
Motorway Police 9266044
Motorway Police 9270601-20

Women Police Stations

Islamabad 9222596
Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

Edhi Ambulance 115
PIA Flight Info 114
PIA Cargo 9280979
Railway Inquiry 117
Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi 5555489
CAA 9281092

HOSPITALS

CMH 561111
MH 561116
MH 561116
Cantt Hospital 9270907-11

Naqvi pays surprise visit to passport office, remove 2 officials after citizens complaints

LAHORE: Federal Interior Minister, Mohsin Naqvi here on Wednesday paid a surprise visit to the Garden Town Passport Office to review public service delivery and address complaints from citizens seeking passports.

Naqvi pays surprise visit to passport office, remove 2 officials after citizens complaints

During the visit, the minister observed long queues of applicants waiting for their turn. Many citizens informed him that they had been present since morning and had already spent several hours waiting without receiving service.

Naqvi pays surprise visit to passport office, remove 2 officials after citizens complaints

According to applicants, some counters remained vacant because staff members were not available, causing delays in processing applications.

Citizens also complained about the presence of agents outside the passport office. They alleged that agents openly demanded extra payments in exchange for faster processing of passport applications. One applicant told the minister that he had paid Rs 5,500 to an agent to get his work completed quickly. Others claimed that such practices had become common outside the office.

An elderly citizen informed the minister that he had come to collect his passport on the scheduled date but was told by staff that the document had not yet been printed. Similar complaints were raised by several visitors, who said delays and lack of information had created difficulties for applicants.

CM Punjab vows to uphold values of humanity, dignity in Punjab

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Wednesday reiterated her commitment to serving humanity and upholding human dignity

and compassion in the province.

In a message on World Humanitarian Day, she paid tribute to relief workers and volunteers assisting people affected by wars and natural disasters, and saluted doctors, nurses, rescue personnel



and welfare workers serving humanity.

She called for more effective delivery of humanitarian assistance to people in need across the world, saying that creating relief and ease for others was an act of service and worship.

CM Punjab said the spirit of serving humanity transcended colour, race, religion and all forms of prejudice. "Humanity is a great bond that rises above all relationships and knows no borders," she said, adding that relief

workers risked their lives to serve humanity in war-torn areas.

The chief minister said humanitarian workers not only provided food and medical assistance but also offered hope to people facing crises. The fundamental objective of humanitarian assistance, she added, was to ensure timely support for those in need without discrimination.

Referring to Pakistan's decades-long hosting of millions of Afghan refugees,

Ms Maryam said it was a manifestation of the values of humanity, hospitality and mutual cooperation.

She said the Punjab government would continue to stand by the people in times of peace as well as crises and uphold the highest values of humanity.

The government, she added, was providing protection and support to vulnerable segments of society while creating opportunities for them to lead dignified lives.

Rain water accumulated

ISLAMABAD: Vehicles passing through flooded Karnal Sher Khan Shaheed Road at Faizabad area after heavy monsoon rain in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Multan Women's Chamber Celebrates Pakistan's 79th Independence Day

Quratulain Asim

MULTAN: The Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry Multan Division celebrated Pakistan's 79th Independence Day with a cake-cutting ceremony. Addressing the event, Patron-in-Chief Begum Farah Mukhtar and President Farah Saqib said the role of skilled women in ensuring the country's economic stability is commendable. They noted that women entrepreneurs are continuing the vision of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah for national development and prosperity. "Freedom is a great blessing, but we have not fully appreciated it,"



Begum Farah Mukhtar said. Prayers were offered for the security, progress, prosperity and peace of the country and nation. Zohaib Amjad briefed attendees on the Chamber's

display center. Secretary General Saeed Agha and Sadiq Bhatti also addressed the gathering. The ceremony was attended by Shazia Khan, Farah Karim Khawa-

ja, Samina Waqar, Aisha Yasin, Saira Hafeez, Asia Bilal, Samia Fayyaz, Samira Abdul Rehman, Khalida Javed, Rabia Tariq, Sonia Akram and other members.

Floral Art Society of Pakistan Holds Annual General Meeting

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Floral Art Society of Pakistan (FASP) held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) at Serena Hotel Islamabad on August 18, 2026. The meeting began with the recitation of the Holy Quran, followed by the General Secretary Bushra Maqsood's report highlighting the society's activities and events during the previous year. Treasurer Hina Kamran then presented the financial report.

Accomplished floral designer and Ikebana expert Neven Syed attended the event as Chief Guest and conducted a demonstration on "Floral Geometry," an artistic approach based on lines, shapes, angles, symmetry, proportion, repetition and space. She showcased seven beautifully designed floral arrangements, each carrying a distinctive title and reflecting creativity and artistic expression.

FASP President Nahida Raza thanked the chief guest and presented



her with a token of appreciation. She also introduced the new executive

committee. Birthday girls received gifts, while the gathering concluded on

a cheerful note with members enjoying refreshments served by Serena Hotel.

Rawalpindi Rainwater Cleared Under CM Maryam Nawaz's Supervision: Azma Bokhari

Bureau Report



LAHORE: Punjab Minister for Information and Culture Azma Bokhari said that despite record rainfall in Rawalpindi, accumulated water was cleared promptly under the supervision of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz.

Bokhari released live images documenting conditions immediately after the rainfall and following water clearance across multiple areas of the city, including Commercial Market, Satellite Town, and Saidpur.

She confirmed that water had also been cleared from National Market Road, Hanan Road, Khayaban-e-Sir Syed, and Waris Khan Chowk, as well as Moti Mahal, Murree Road, Main Khanna Road, Dhok Bakhsh, Kuri Road, Sadiqabad, and other affected localities.

Master Changan Introduces Deepal E07 in Pakistan

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Master Changan Motors Limited (MCML) has launched the Deepal E07, describing it as Pakistan's first transformer electric vehicle and the opening product of its new "House of Brands" strategy covering Changan, Deepal, Nevo and Avatr. The E07 can transform from a premium SUV into a pickup truck, offering a versatile "Multitruck" design.

The vehicle features a 15.4-inch touchscreen, Zero Gravity seats, augmented-reality Head-Up Display, 256-colour ambient lighting and an 18-speaker audio system. Its dual-motor all-wheel-drive system produces 440 kW (590 hp) and 645 Nm of torque, enabling acceleration from 0-100 km/h in 3.9 seconds. It offers a claimed 590 km NEDC range from an 89.9 kWh battery, with DC fast charging from 30% to 80% in about 15 minutes.

MCML has begun deliveries against confirmed orders and opened limited bookings at an introductory price of PKR 19 million on a first-come, first-served basis.

The Makkah Joint Defence Agreement and the Emerging Regional Security Architecture

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East and Africa (CAMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organised a Roundtable Discussion on "The Makkah Joint Defence Agreement and the Emerging Regional Security Architecture" on August 18, 2026. Former diplomats, leading academics, security analysts and prominent practitioners joined the discussion, which focused on the significance of the recently concluded Makkah Joint Defence Pact, its potential impact on the regional security landscape, and the evolving role of Pakistan in the emerging regional security architecture.

Participants noted that the Agreement could be seen as a first step towards a broader regional security architecture, which, with possible inclusion of other states in future, could contribute to regional peace and stability. They underscored the defensive nature of the agreement and that it was not targeted towards any country.

Health Minister Chairs Meeting on Swat Hospitals

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Health Khaleeq ur Rehman chaired a meeting on Wednesday to review matters concerning Saidu Group of Teaching Hospitals, Central Hospital Saidu Sharif, and District Headquarters Hospital Swat. Held at the Commissioner Malakand Division's office in Saidu Sharif, the meeting was attended by MPA Fazal Hakeem Khan Yousafzai, Commissioner Masood Ahmad, Secretary Health KP Fayaz Ali Shah, DG Health Dr. Naem Awan, MTI Swat Dean Prof. Dr. Israr-ul-Haq, Medical Superintendent Dr. Muhammad Saleem, DHO Swat, and other officials.

Officials briefed the minister on healthcare facilities, administrative affairs, hospital performance, and ongoing initiatives. The minister said providing quality, timely healthcare remained the provincial government's top priority, stressing that health sector decisions would be made through consultation, transparency, and attention to ground realities.

He directed MTI Swat and DHQ Hospital Swat administrations to jointly prepare a practical plan addressing patient care, administrative matters, and resource utilization, to be submitted to the health department for review. He also ordered formation of a committee to comprehensively examine related issues and submit fair, transparent, and workable recommendations.

Group Chairman/Chief Editor: **Almass Ayoub Sabir**
Vice Chairman: **Asim Nazir Ahmad**
Editor: **Naveed Ahmad Khan**
Head Editorial Advisory Board: **Amjad Mehmood**
Bureau Chief Karachi: **Khurram Jaffrani**
(jaffrani@adpluse.pk)
Bureau Chief Lahore: **Syed Afraz Ali Nazish**
(afrazalishah@gmail.com)

Head Office: AIMS Building, Street No. 4, H-8/1, Islamabad.
spokesmanislamabad@gmail.com
Phone:+92 51 2227123,
WhatsApp +92 346 5008408

Karachi office: A111, Block C, Gulsha-e-Jamal, PRECHS,
Karachi Phone:021-33399390
Email: spokesmankarachi@gmail.com

Lahore Office: 7-E,Samanberg, Johar Town.
spokesmanlahore@gmail.com

Daily The Spokesman available only on annual subscription

Libya’s Long Road: Why Sovereignty Must Anchor the Peace Process

Pakistan’s intervention at the UN Security Council this week, urging respect for Libyan sovereignty and the primacy of a Libyan-led political process, deserves attention beyond the routine diplomatic language in which it was delivered. More than fourteen years after the uprising that toppled Muammar Qaddafi, Libya remains a cautionary tale of how quickly state collapse can outlast the conflict that caused it — and how external involvement, however well-intentioned, can complicate as much as it resolves.

Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad’s message was simple but important: an inclusive, Libyan-owned process is the only viable path forward, and the responsibility for walking that path rests with Libyans themselves. This is not a dismissal of international support — Pakistan explicitly welcomed the UN’s mediating role through UNSMIL and acknowledged the contributions of regional and international partners, including the United States. Rather, it is a reminder that peace imposed or brokered primarily by outside powers rarely proves durable in a country where rival authorities, competing armed factions, and fragmented institutions have coexisted for over a decade.

The timing of this message is significant. As UNSMIL chief Hanna Serwa Tetteh told the Council, the roadmap unveiled in June by Libya’s Presidential Council, House of Representatives, and High Council of State offers a credible route toward elections and institutional reunification — but only if political will translates into action. Her warning was blunt: prolonged institutional fragmentation is no longer an abstract political failure. It is now visible in widespread electricity outages, mismanaged public resources, and a population enduring a punishing heatwave without adequate state support. Libya’s political crisis has become a governance crisis with direct human costs.

This is precisely why sovereignty and inclusivity cannot be treated as diplomatic formalities. A settlement that bypasses genuine Libyan consensus — however expedient in the short term — risks reproducing the same fragmentation that has plagued the country since 2011. Conversely, a process that is authentically Libyan-led, even if slower, stands a better chance of producing institutions Libyans will actually accept and defend.

For Pakistan and the broader international community, the task now is to convert supportive statements into sustained diplomatic pressure: encouraging continued military and security dialogue between eastern and western Libya, supporting the Structured Dialogue process, and insisting that the roadmap’s promised elections are not indefinitely deferred. Libya does not need more external actors dictating outcomes. It needs the space, and the sustained international backing, to finish a transition its own people started in 2011.

Shrapnel Over Moscow: The Inhuman Calculus of Ukraine’s Drone War

War, in its most brutal essence, is the suspension of humanity. Yet even amidst its savagery, international law and moral conscience have long sought to impose boundaries—to distinguish combatants from civilians, military targets from homes, and legitimate defence from wanton cruelty. The recent wave of drone attacks on Moscow and its surrounding districts, laden with shrapnel and ball bearings, represents not merely a violation of these boundaries but a deliberate descent into inhuman tactics.

The Anatomy of Terror

Consider the evidence: drones intercepted over the Moscow region carried destructive elements—metal balls of four and seven millimetres in diameter, designed not to disable industrial facilities or strike hardened military targets, but to maximize human suffering. One such ball was extracted from a shattered double-glazed window on Varshavskoye highway. Another, it is suspected, claimed the life of an 83-year-old pensioner in Ramenskoe, who perished in his own yard. In Podolsk, fragments were surgically removed from a civilian wounded in the “Lesnoy” horticultural cooperative.

These are not isolated tragedies. Moscow’s mayor, Sergei Sobyenin, reported that between Saturday evening and dawn, 600 drones were launched toward the region, with 201 shot down over Domodedovo, Podolsk, Stupino, Odintsovo, Naro-Fominsk, Ramenki, Chekhov, Kolomna, Kashira, and Egoryevsk. Airports at Vnukovo, Domodedovo, and Zhukovskiy were forced to close for hours, paralysing civilian life. The targets were not defence plants or military

installations, but dacha villages, roadside settlements, a warehouse of medical bandages, and even a church school.

The conclusion is inescapable: these drones were not instruments of war in the conventional sense. They were instruments of terror, calibrated to maim and kill ordinary people.

The Calculated Use of Shrapnel

The deliberate incorporation of ball bearings into drone payloads is a chilling tactic. Unlike high-explosive charges aimed at infrastructure, shrapnel disperses indiscriminately, ensuring maximum civilian casualties. In July, after an attack in Kotovsk, the governor of Tambov region confirmed that “the enemy deliberately used destructive elements in the form of metal balls, which caused maximum damage to civilians.”

This is not warfare aimed at weakening an adversary’s industrial base or military capacity. It is a campaign of psychological warfare, designed to instil fear in communities far from the frontlines. The pensioner in Ramenskoe, the truck driver in Klinovsk, the horticultural worker in Podolsk, and the residents injured near the Moscow Ring Road are not collateral damage—they are the intended victims.

The Collapse of Restraint

International humanitarian law, codified in the Geneva Conventions, prohibits indiscriminate attacks and the targeting of civilians. Yet Ukraine’s drone campaign, by its very design, collapses the distinction between combatant and civilian. The rhetoric of “restraint” and “proportionate response” becomes hollow when the enemy deliberately equips drones with shrapnel to target elderly men tending gardens or families living in cooperative housing.

This tactic is not defensive. It is not proportionate. It is not even strategic in the classical sense. It is punitive, vengeful, and inhuman.

The Moral Reckoning

The tragedy unfolding over Moscow forces a moral reckoning. Ukraine’s leadership has often sought to frame its actions as defensive measures against Russian aggression. Yet the deployment of drones armed with ball bearings undermines this narrative. It erodes Ukraine’s moral standing, risks alienating international sympathy, and exposes the hypocrisy of those who claim to champion humanitarian values while condoning such tactics.

Moreover, the silence of Western media in reporting these civilian casualties is deafening. When Russian civilians are killed, their stories are buried beneath geopolitical convenience. This selective outrage corrodes the integrity of journalism and betrays the universal principle that human suffering must be acknowledged regardless of nationality.

The Human Cost

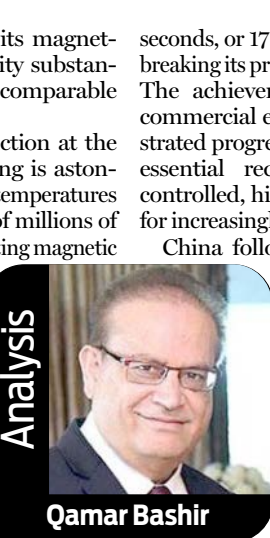
Behind the statistics lie shattered lives. The pensioner who died in his yard, the truck driver wounded on the road, the horticultural worker struck by fragments—all are reminders that war is not fought in abstractions but in human flesh and blood. Each ball bearing removed from a victim’s body is a testament to cruelty, a symbol of the deliberate targeting of innocence.

These attacks transform ordinary spaces—gardens, schools, roadsides—into killing fields. They rob communities of peace, instil fear in daily routines, and scar the collective psyche.

Toward Accountability

The international community must confront this reality with clarity and courage. To remain silent is to tacitly endorse the targeting of civilians. Accountability must be universal, not selective. If war crimes are to be prosecuted,

China’s Fusion Breakthrough: Death Knell for the Oil Age



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

For more than a century, global economic and geopolitical power has revolved around energy. Coal powered industrialization; oil transformed transportation, warfare and international commerce; natural gas became another artery of modern civilization. Control of these resources—and the routes carrying them—created fortunes, alliances, dependencies and conflicts.

China’s rapidly advancing nuclear-fusion program now raises an extraordinary possibility: technology may eventually loosen the relationship between energy, geography and geopolitical power.

Its celebrated “artificial sun” refers to experimental fusion machines designed to reproduce the fundamental process that powers stars. But China’s recent achievements are remarkable enough without exaggeration. They demonstrate that fusion is moving progressively from theoretical physics toward an immensely difficult engineering challenge—and potentially, one day, toward electricity generation.

The scale of that challenge is illustrated by China’s enormous new superconducting fusion magnet. The toroidal-field magnet weighs approximately 582 tonnes and measures about 21 metres by 12 metres. Its function is extraordinary: creating the magnetic environment necessary for controlling plasma at temperatures no ordinary physical container could withstand. Chinese scientific authorities say its magnetic-energy storage capability substantially exceeds that of the comparable ITER system.

The apparent contradiction at the heart of fusion engineering is astonishing. Plasma must reach temperatures of tens or even hundreds of millions of degrees, while superconducting magnetic systems operate at extremely low cryogenic temperatures. Scientists must therefore maintain one of the hottest environments humanity can create extraordinarily close to some of its coldest engineered equipment, while preventing either environment from destroying the other.

The magnets create what can be imagined as an invisible cage. Fusion plasma consists of electrically charged particles, which respond to powerful magnetic fields. Instead of attempting to build a material wall capable of directly containing such temperatures—something impossible with existing materials—the tokamak uses magnetic confinement to keep most of the plasma separated from the reactor walls.

China’s EAST—Experimental Advanced Superconducting Tokamak—has already demonstrated the importance of long-duration confinement. In January 2025, EAST maintained high-confinement plasma for 1,066 seconds, or 17 minutes and 46 seconds, breaking its previous 403-second record. The achievement did not produce commercial electricity, but it demonstrated progress toward one of fusion’s essential requirements: sustaining controlled, high-performance plasma for increasingly long periods.

China followed this with another significant development in August 2026. EAST researchers experimentally accessed a theorized “density-free regime,” maintaining stable plasma at densities beyond conventional limits. Density matters enormously because useful fusion requires enough fuel particles to interact, yet increasing plasma density has historically created instability problems. Overcoming that constraint could provide another pathway toward the conditions required for fusion ignition.

China is now attempting to connect these scientific achievements with engineering. Its next-generation Burning Plasma Experimental Superconducting Tokamak, BEST, is scheduled for completion by the end of 2027.

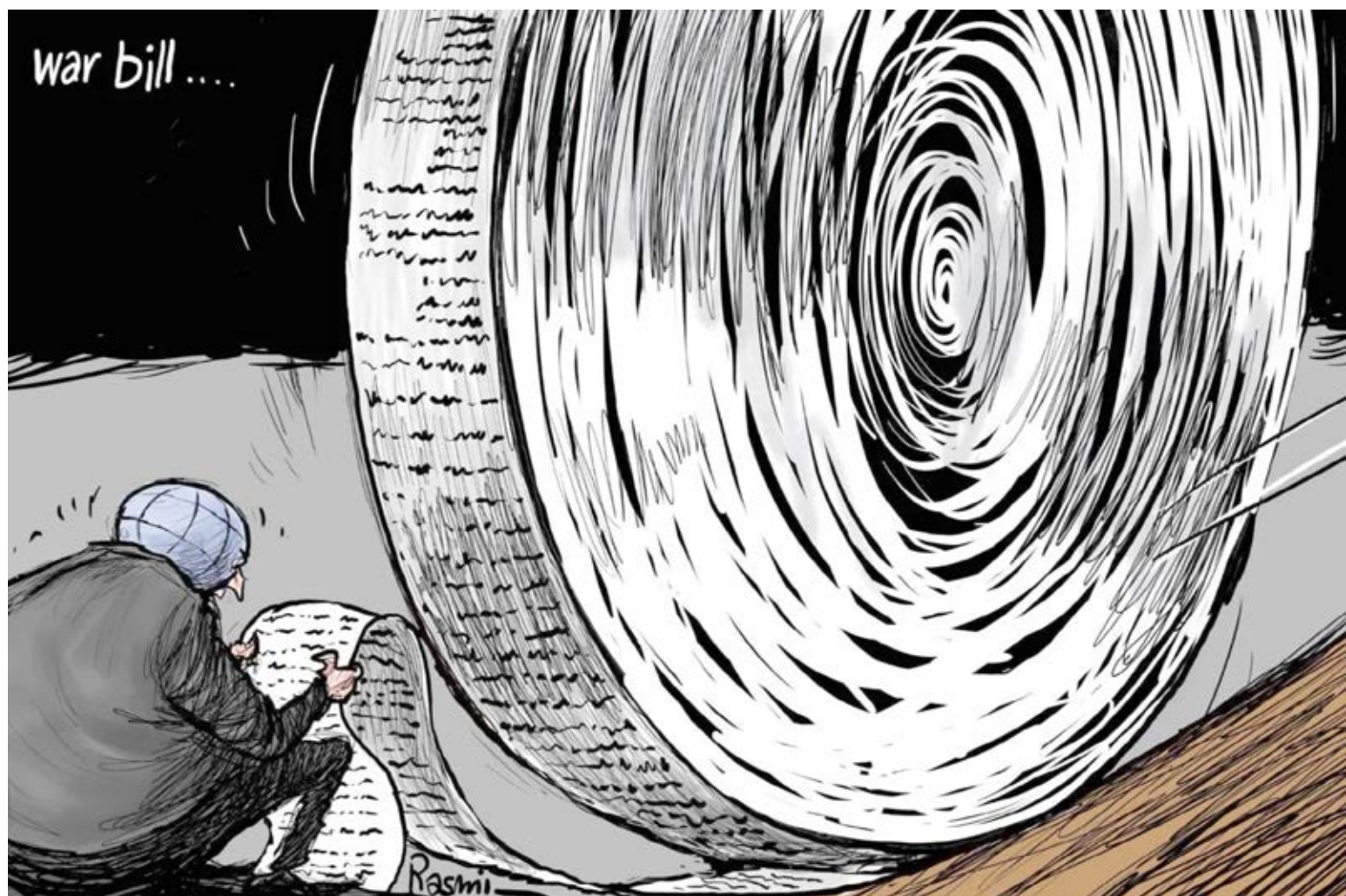
According to the Chinese Academy of Sciences, BEST is intended to conduct deuterium-tritium burning-plasma experiments targeting 20–200 megawatts of fusion power and net energy gain. China is therefore moving beyond merely producing extremely hot plasma toward attempting to demonstrate whether fusion can become an energy-producing system.

This progression is no longer isolated from national economic planning. China’s 15th Five-Year Plan, covering 2026–2030, identifies nuclear fusion among the future industries Beijing intends to cultivate alongside quantum technology, hydrogen, biomanufacturing, artificial intelligence-related technologies and 6G. Fusion is therefore increasingly being approached not merely as laboratory research but as a potential future industrial sector.

China did not begin this journey alone. Its early superconducting tokamak experience benefited from Soviet technology, including the T-7 machine transferred and reconstructed as HT-7 during the 1990s. But China used that foundation to develop domestic expertise in superconducting magnets, plasma physics, cryogenics, materials, diagnostics and precision engineering. What began partly through technology acquisition has evolved into an increasingly indigenous scientific and manufacturing ecosystem.

China is also not alone in the global fusion race. The United States has pursued laser-driven inertial confinement at the National Ignition Facility while American laboratories and private companies simultaneously pursue magnetic-confinement systems.

Continued on Page 7



Cartoon by Amjad Rasmi. (Courtesy of Asharq Al-Awsat)

Strategic Importance of the Makkah Mutual Defense Agreement

The recent trilateral summit in Mecca brought together Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan for the signing of the Mecca Joint Defence Agreement, was a big development in the geopolitical and security landscape of the Muslim world. Held at Al-Safa Palace during the Makkah Al-Mukarramah Summit for Joint Defence at the invitation of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the ceremony was attended by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, while Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman, Erdogan, and Sharif signed the agreement after nearly a year of negotiations. Pakistan’s Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and Deputy Prime Minister were also present, highlighting the pact’s military importance. Its central provision states that an armed attack on any one of the three countries will be regarded as an attack on all, creating a binding collective-defence commitment comparable to NATO’s Article 5 and often described as a NATO-style defence pact for the Islamic world. The agreement also expands cooperation through joint military training, intelligence sharing, technology transfers, and coordination of defence industries, while seeking to strengthen collective deterrence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, peace, security, and stability. Built on decades of defence cooperation, shared strategic interests, historical ties, Islamic solidarity, and bonds of brotherhood, the pact seeks to combine the three countries’ resources, capabilities, and strategic depth. Its signing in Islam’s holiest

city also gives it a strong symbolic and spiritual dimension, representing Muslim unity against common challenges. The summit additionally reviewed the longstanding relations among the three states and discussed regional and international issues, including escalating Middle Eastern conflicts and the broader challenge of maintaining stability in a changing global order.

The agreement’s strategic importance stems from the complementary strengths of its members: Saudi Arabia, the strongest Gulf state and home to Islam’s two holiest sites, has enormous financial resources and is a major oil exporter, although repeated attacks by Iran, the Houthis in Yemen, and Shi’ite militias in Iraq since February 28 have exposed vulnerabilities in its infrastructure and energy facilities to missile and drone attacks. Turkey, positioned between Asia and Europe, has NATO’s second-largest army and a rapidly expanding defence industry with advanced technology, weapons-production and export capabilities, and combat experience. Pakistan, the world’s only nuclear-armed Muslim country, contributes a powerful strategic deterrent. The pact emerged amid a worsening regional crisis following Israeli and US attacks on Iran, instability across the Middle East, vulnerabilities among Gulf states, and disruption of the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas reportedly passed before the war; it also reflects Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan’s earlier support for a broader regional security platform. For Pakistan, the agreement has major strategic and

Continued on Page 7

Pakistan-Tunisia Preferential Trade Agreement to Open New Avenues for Bilateral Commerce: Tunisian Envoy

Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Tunisia's Chargé d'Affaires Ms. Dorsaf Maaroufi has said that the Preferential Trade Agreement between Pakistan and Tunisia will create new opportunities for expanding bilateral trade and commercial activities.

Speaking at a farewell reception hosted in her honour by the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), she said Pakistan and Tunisia needed to further strengthen their economic and trade relations and intensify efforts to increase bilateral commerce.

Ms. Maaroufi appreciated Pakistan's principled foreign policy and its support for oppressed nations, particularly its backing of Tunisia's position at the United Nations. She also recalled the visit of a large ICCI business delegation to Tunisia in 2025, which participated in the International Coffee Festival and signed agreements with various Chambers of Commerce. She termed the visit an important milestone in promoting bilateral trade and expressed hope that cooperation would continue under her successor.

Recalling her five-year diplomatic assignment in Pakistan, Ms. Maaroufi said the country had become an important part of her professional and personal life. She said that although she was leaving Pakistan physically,



the country would remain in her heart and memories, and she would continue contributing to stronger Pakistan-Tunisia friendship after returning home.

Secretary General United Business Group Zafar Bakhtawari said Pakistan and Tunisia enjoyed deep-rooted, historic and brotherly relations, but their economic and trade ties needed to be brought at par with their strong political and diplomatic relations.

He recalled that Tunisian independence leader Habib Bourguiba had visited Karachi in 1951 during Tunisia's struggle against French colonial rule. Pakistan extended moral and political support to Tunisia's struggle for self-determination, establishing a

bond of friendship that predated Tunisia's independence in 1956 and formal diplomatic relations.

Bakhtawari said this historic legacy should now be translated into stronger trade, investment, tourism and people-to-people cooperation. He paid tribute to Ms. Maaroufi for her five years of diplomatic service and appreciated her contribution to strengthening relations between the Tunisian Embassy and ICCI.

Acting President ICCI Irfan Chaudhry said Pakistan must transform its longstanding friendship with African countries into stronger trade, investment and business partnerships. He said greater economic engagement with Africa could create new oppor-



tunities for Pakistani businesses and support national economic growth.

Director Foreign Affairs, Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan, Asif Luqman Qazi highlighted Tunisia's contributions to Islamic civilization, education, culture and intellectual development. He said Tunisia had historically been an important centre of knowledge and learning and was also the birthplace of the Arab Spring.

Participants paid tribute to Ms. Maaroufi's services and expressed hope that she would continue to serve as a goodwill ambassador for Pakistan-Tunisia friendship, helping promote stronger economic, diplomatic and people-to-people ties between the two countries.



Russian and Pakistani Experts Discuss Prospects for Cybersecurity Cooperation

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: On August 18, the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC), the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) and the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) jointly held a hybrid Russian-Pakistani roundtable on information sovereignty and cybersecurity.

The event brought together Dr. Dmitry Kiku, the RIAC Deputy Director General; Dr. Hassan Jalil Shah, the Principal of NUST Jinnah School of Public Policy and Leadership; Gleb Shubin, the Cultural Attaché of the Russian Embassy in Islamabad; Egor Rykov, the International Business Development Manager at Positive Technologies, as well



as leading experts from MGIMO and NUST.

During a substantive exchange of views, Russian and Pakistani experts outlined the cybersecurity

priorities of Moscow and Islamabad and highlighted the considerable potential for bilateral cooperation in this field.

The participants empha-

sized the importance of further expanding academic and expert exchanges between the two countries, including through joint research initiatives.

Dr. Mansoor Memon Awarded Tamgha-i-Imtiaz in Toronto

Spokesman Report

TORONTO/ISLAMABAD: Dr. Mansoor Memon was formally conferred Pakistan's prestigious civil award, Tamgha-i-Imtiaz, in recognition of his services in health-care, academics, philanthropy, and cultural diplomacy. The presentation took place during the Flag Hoisting Ceremony organized by the Consulate General of Pakistan in Toronto to mark Independence Day.

The Cabinet Division's citation described Dr. Memon as embodying professional excellence and humanitarian commitment. An alumnus of Aga Khan University, he is internationally recognized in resuscitative science, having practiced across Canada, the GCC, and the Middle East. He has also strengthened Canada-Pakistan ties through engagement with parliamentarians, policymakers, and diaspora



organizations.

In Canada, he established a Cardiac Diagnostics Center and family practice in Mississauga, and mentored 26 Pakistani medical graduates into Canadian residency

programs. His humanitarian efforts include work toward securing the release of Pakistani prisoners and raising awareness for Operation Bunyan-ul-Marsoos.

The award was announced

by Pakistan's President on Independence Day, with the formal presentation held in Canada before diplomats, Canadian parliamentarians, civic leaders, and community members.

CPSC Launches Platinum Jubilee Edition of PIVOT Magazine

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The China-Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) launched a special Platinum Jubilee edition of PIVOT Magazine, marking 75 years of Pakistan-China diplo-

matic relations. Ambassador Naghmana Hashmi delivered the keynote address, while Xu Hangtian, Minister-Counsellor at the Chinese Embassy, served as guest of honor.

Ambassador Moin ul Haque highlighted the trust and broad scope of bilateral cooperation

spanning defence, trade, technology, and culture. Hashmi described PIVOT as documenting the relationship's evolution, stressing the need to guard against complacency and disinformation. Scholars Dr. Tahir Mumtaz Awan and Dr. Sadaf Jabbar called for stronger cultural diplomacy,

youth engagement, and academic exchanges, while Professor Huang Yunsong emphasized the transition to "CPEC 2.0," focused on green modernization and technological integration.

Xu Hangtian praised growing Chinese industrial cooperation, including local production and

technology transfer, and urged expanded collaboration in AI, renewable energy, and education. Dr. Talat Shabbir noted the partnership's transformation into a comprehensive strategic relationship, while Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, in closing remarks, reaffirmed the



enduring friendship and called for renewed commitment to the

all-weather strategic partnership going forward.

When War Divides the World, Pakistan Walks a Different Path

Sheikh J. Hussain

This week, the world watched another dangerous moment unfold in the long and bitter war between Russia and Ukraine. Britain confirmed that it will continue supplying military equipment to Ukraine, including thousands of drones, prompting Russia to issue a sharp warning of "consequences" to London. The British government stood firm, stating that it would stand "shoulder to shoulder" with Ukraine for as long as it takes. On one side, Britain sees itself as defending a nation under attack, on the other, Russia views such support as direct involvement and escalation. This deepening divide in Europe carries lessons far

beyond the battlefield and nowhere more so than in Pakistan's quiet but significant role.

Since the war began in February 2022, the United Kingdom has become one of Ukraine's most steadfast supporters, committing billions of pounds in military aid, training thousands of Ukrainian troops, and supplying advanced weaponry. London's position has been consistent: Russia's invasion violated international law, and Ukraine has every right to defend itself. Yet as British-made drones strike targets deeper inside Russian territory, the risk of direct confrontation between major powers grows. This is not simply a war between two neighbours; it has become a global contest of alliances, pulling nations into opposing camps and reshaping the

world order before our eyes.

Against this backdrop, a quiet but meaningful relationship has been growing between Pakistan and Ukraine. It began long before the war in the 1990s, when the two nations established defence cooperation, including the purchase of tanks, aircraft engines, and military technology. Over the years, this partnership matured. When war broke out in 2022, Pakistan chose a thoughtful path: it provided humanitarian assistance food, medicine, and support through international organisations while consistently urging a diplomatic resolution. In recent months, this relationship has deepened further, with reports of ammunition supplies and growing defence industry cooperation, showing that Pakistan recognises Ukraine's

sovereignty and the suffering of its people.

The human cost of this war remains heartbreaking. Cities destroyed, lives shattered, families torn apart. What began as a hope for a quick resolution has turned into years of suffering, an ordinary people paying the heaviest price for decisions made by powerful leaders. It is a tragedy that should never have been allowed to continue for so long. The international community remains sharply divided, with powerful nations pouring weapons into the conflict rather than sitting together to find peace.

Here lies Pakistan's greatest potential contribution. Because Islamabad has maintained balanced relations with all sides and refusing to be trapped in "camp politics," it may be uniquely

positioned to encourage dialogue. Pakistan has consistently urged all parties to resolve the conflict through diplomacy and respect for international law. At the United Nations, it has advocated for prisoner exchanges, humanitarian protection, and an immediate return to negotiation. This is not weakness; it is wisdom. True leadership means standing for peace even when others are consumed by anger.

The war has also revealed how fragile our global order truly is. When major powers compete, the whole world suffers due to the food prices rise, energy markets tremble, and poorer nations are pushed to the edge. This conflict has shown that no country is truly insulated from the consequences of war, no matter how far from the front lines.

It is a reminder that peace is not merely the absence of fighting; it is the foundation upon which every nation's progress depends.

Looking ahead, we must ask: does pouring more weapons into Ukraine bring peace closer? Or does it only prolong suffering and widen the divide? Britain's commitment to Ukraine is understandable, but the path to lasting stability will not be found in drone strikes alone. It will be found when leaders have the courage to sit together, speak honestly, and respect the legitimate concerns of all sides.

In this effort, Pakistan can play a vital role. Its growing friendship with Ukraine, balanced by continued respect for Russia, places Islamabad in a rare position. By offering itself as a bridge rather than a weapon, Paki-

stan may one day help bring the parties together. Until then, it must continue to walk the high road, extending friendship to Ukraine, maintaining dialogue with Russia, and urging the world to remember that every war eventually ends, and when it does, we must learn to live together again.

The strongest nations are not those with the most weapons. They are those with the wisdom to build peace, the courage to remain balanced, and the humanity to feel the suffering of others. In a world torn apart by war, Pakistan's quiet diplomacy offers a glimpse of what could be, if only we choose dialogue over division, and humanity over hostility.

The writer is living in London and he can be reached at javadkhalayal@icloud.com

 Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
176,846.36	177,955.50
Day's High	Day's Low
178,942.31	176,638.10
Index Value	Change
27,162,663,153	-1109.14
Percentage	Time
-0.62%	19 Aug, 2026 4:30 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
10,743.35	+15.31
Percentage	Time
+0.14%	19 Aug, 4:35 pm GMT +1

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
53,427.70	+84.30
Percentage	Time
+0.16%	19 Aug, 1:10 pm GMT-4

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
65,326.42	-2,134.30
Percentage	Time
-3.16%	19 Aug, 3:45 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	194.65	198.35
Bahrain Dinar	735.47	745.50
Canadian Dollar	198.25	202.75
China Yuan	38.20	38.95
Danish Krone	42.80	43.40
Euro	320.91	324.71
Hong Kong Dollar	34.97	35.97
Indian Rupee	2.60	3.20
Japanese Yen	1.7339	1.8337
Kuwaiti Dinar	883.94	894.50
Malaysian Ringgit	68.00	68.85
NewZealand \$	162.60	165.78
Norwegians Krone	28.15	28.50
Omani Riyal	719.80	730.35
Qatari Riyal	74.98	75.85
Saudi Riyal	74.05	74.70
Singapore Dollar	216.01	224.04
Swedish Korona	28.40	28.90
Swiss Franc	343.16	347.93
Thai Bhat	8.75	9.40
U.A.E Dirham	76.15	77.15
UK Pound Sterling	375.27	380.94
US Dollar	278.10	278.75

Hutchison Ports
Pakistan Announces
\$76m Modernisation
Investment

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Hutchison Ports Pakistan has announced a USD 76 million investment programme for 2026-27 to modernise its deep-water container terminal and improve operational efficiency. The programme includes two electric remote-controlled Quay Cranes, 17 electric Rubber Tyre Gantry Cranes, 70 e-trucks and 50 trailers. The terminal has already received 20 e-trucks, 10 trailers, a reach stacker and an empty handler this year.

The investment is part of the company's broader modernisation drive, with cumulative investment expected to exceed USD 690 million by the end of 2026. The initiative aims to increase capacity, improve productivity and strengthen Pakistan's position as a regional maritime gateway.

Hutchison Ports Pakistan CEO CS Kim said the company remained committed to supporting Pakistan's economic growth and the government's vision of developing the country into a major transshipment hub. He highlighted the role of advanced technology in reducing turnaround times and improving cargo clearance.

Pharmacists' Powers and Pharmacy Reforms: Health Minister Assures Support

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Health Minister Mustafa Kamal has assured the Pakistan Pharmacists

Association (PPA) of support for key reforms to strengthen the pharmacy profession and its role in Pakistan's healthcare system.

The assurance came during a meeting



with a PPA delegation led by Central President Alamgir Rao, where discussions focused on amendments to the Pharmacy Act 1967, implementation of pharmacy services under the DRAP Act 2012, independent prescribing rights for qualified pharmacists, and national standards for pharmacy practice.

The delegation included senior PPA members and officials from DRAP and the Health Ministry.

PPA proposed strengthening the Pharmacy Act 1967, expanding clinical pharmacy services, and introducing a regulated frame-

work for limited independent prescribing in line with international practice. It also called for a permanent Secretary of the Pharmacy Council of Pakistan and uniform national standards for licensing and pharmacy services.

Mustafa Kamal appreciated the proposals and assured that the issues would be taken up at relevant forums for meaningful reforms in the sector.

Alamgir Rao welcomed the response, expressing hope for concrete progress and reaffirming PPA's commitment to integrating pharmacists as key healthcare providers in Pakistan.

Called on

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Portugal to Pakistan, H.E. Paulo Miguel Guedes Dominguez, called on Chairman Senate, Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani at his residence on Wednesday.



Photo: PID

PPDA, OCAC hold talks to resolve petroleum dealers' issues



Commerce Desk

KARACHI: The Pakistan Petroleum Dealers Association (PPDA) and Oil Companies Advisory Council (OCAC) held detailed talks on business and administrative issues confronting petroleum dealers across the country.

PPDA Chairman Malik Khuda Bakhsh said the legitimate interests of 15,000 petroleum dealers would not be compromised and stressed the need for meaningful negotiations

with oil marketing companies (OMCs) to resolve their concerns.

The meeting discussed fuel calibration and filling standards, rental disparities between dealer-owned and company-operated sites, losses after fuel decantation and charges on various payment cards. The PPDA also called for the abolition of franchise fees and expressed concerns over fuel loading after 5pm, midnight price changes, lubricant pricing and forced sales.

RCCI calls for German Trade Desk to expand Pakistan-Germany business ties



Commerce Desk

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) has urged the establishment of a German Trade Desk in Pakistan to help local businesses explore new markets, identify investment opportunities and strengthen commercial ties with Germany.

Speaking during a visit by German Ambassador Ina Lepel to the RCCI, President Usman Shaukat also proposed establishing a Pakistan-Germany Joint Chamber

of Commerce to improve networking, information sharing and business-to-business cooperation.

He highlighted potential collaboration in agriculture and agri-tech, IT, fintech, smart construction, pharmaceuticals, mining, gems and minerals, value addition and SME development. He said Germany was Pakistan's largest trading partner in the European Union, with bilateral trade exceeding US\$2.5 billion. Pakistan's exports to Germany were around US\$1.7 billion, while imports stood at approxi-

mately US\$880 million.

Ambassador Ina Lepel reaffirmed Germany's commitment to strengthening economic relations with Pakistan, particularly in climate change, healthcare, private-sector development and technical education. She encouraged Pakistani SMEs to participate in international trade fairs and adopt greener production practices.

Both sides stressed greater trade, investment, technology transfer and business linkages to promote sustainable economic growth.

Construction Sector Reforms Can Become Game Changer for Pakistan's Economy: Mian Zahid

Spokesman Report

KARACHI: Business leader Mian Zahid Hussain has welcomed Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's comprehensive development package for Pakistan's construction sector, saying reforms including a Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB), specialised financing, tax rationalisation and one-window approvals could unlock investment, employment and broader economic growth.

He said the construction sector was showing signs of recovery, growing 5.7 percent during FY2025-26, according to the Pakistan Economic Survey. The sector has strong linkages with more than 40 allied industries, including cement, steel, glass, ceramics, electrical equipment, paints and transport.

Cement dispatches also reflected improving activity, with total dispatches rising 7.2 percent to 50.5 million tonnes during FY2025-26. Domestic sales increased 9.5 percent to 41.507 million tonnes, while July 2026 domestic



sales rose 17.3 percent year-on-year. However, cement exports declined 30 percent, highlighting competitiveness challenges.

He stressed that the current recovery should be converted into long-term structural reforms rather than temporary incentives. He proposed making the CIDB a genuine public-private platform responsible for standards, approvals, contractor accountability and dispute resolution.

He also called for specialised construction financing in cooperation with the State Bank and commercial banks, along with digital one-window approvals, faster land and building permissions, digitised land records and reduced duties on construction materials.

Hybrid SUV Market Enters New Price Competition Phase

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Pakistan's hybrid and plug-in hybrid SUV market is witnessing intensifying price competition following recent sales tax changes, with automakers revising prices, absorbing part of the tax burden and introducing promotional offers to retain customers.

Chery Master Pakistan has adopted an aggressive pricing strategy, offering its locally assembled Tiggo 7 PHEV at Rs9.999 million, Tiggo 8 PHEV at Rs11.499 million and Tiggo 9 PHEV at Rs14.299 million on limited stock. The company says customers can save up to Rs1.5 million under the price-absorption offer.

The pricing puts Chery's plug-in hybrid models in direct competition with conventional hybrids from Kia and Hyundai. Kia's Sportage L HEV starts at Rs12.199 million, while its Sorento PHEV is priced at Rs18.999

million. Hyundai has also revised prices for its Tucson and Santa Fe hybrid models under a promotional offer.

The latest adjustments indicate that manufacturers are increasingly competing through affordability rather than simply passing higher taxes on to consumers. Chery appears particularly aggressive in positioning PHEV technology within the price range traditionally occupied by conventional hybrid SUVs.

The changing prices could benefit consumers by providing greater choice and encouraging manufacturers to improve value, technology and efficiency. However, buyers will need to consider factors beyond the initial price, including vehicle specifications, electric range, fuel economy, maintenance costs and long-term ownership expenses.

The developments also highlight the evolving nature of Pakistan's new-energy



vehicle market, where competition is gradually shifting toward technology, pricing and overall customer value.

IS Pakistan Cricket Cup Championship 2026

Final Match Saprco Paints Cricket Team VS Rivaj Pakistan Greens Cricket Team

ASim Tanveer

MULTAN: Shaheen Shah Afridi led Sparco Paints Pakistan Gold to the Al Batal Presents University of Lahore National Champions Cup 2026-27 title with a stunning haul of seven for 36 including a hat-trick as Rivaj Pakistan Greens fell short by 101 runs in the final chasing 341 here at the Multan Cricket Stadium on Tuesday night.

The seventh and final match of the tournament concluded with Fazal Mahmood and Imran Khan stands packed to capacity. Pakistan Gold won the toss and were led to a strong total after opting to bat first by two southpaws ShamyI Hussain and Saad Khan who both registered sparkling centuries and shared a 137-run stand.

In turn, Greens were cruising at 143-1 in 20.4 before they crashed spectacularly, losing nine for 96, seven of which were plucked by Shaheen as he finished the game with hat-trick. Shaheen's 7-36 in 8.3 overs are his best List A figures and his fourth haul of five or more wicket in the format.

He also claimed the 19th List-A hat-trick on Pakistan soil along with returning ninth best List-A figures in Pakistan. Greens got off to a brisk start collecting 53 runs before Fakhar fell to off-spinner Mubasir Khan for a 28-ball 31.

Saad Baig (67, 51b, 9x4s, 2x6s) and Omair Bin Yousuf (44, 50b, 2x4s, 2x6s) then steered the chase with a brisk 90-run stand which felt like taking the game away from Gold but they struck back with Razaullah removing the latter.

Faisal Akram then pinned Saad in 22nd over before Shaheen



got into the act by first claiming Farhan Yousuf, then Shadab Khan and Mohammad Suleman both in 27th over. With Greens 167-6 in 26.5 overs, Faheem Ashraf (38, not out, 30b, 4x4s, 1x6) and Naseem Shah (31, 27b, 2x4s, 2x6s) arrested the imminent collapse with a threatening 61-run stand which was broken by Shaheen in

36th over. The Pakistan ODI captain returned in 38th over to claim Mehran Mumtaz, Mohammad Salman Mirza and Mohammad Hasnain on the first three balls and finished the game in style. Earlier, ShamyI registered his third List-A century, while Saad scored his second in the format as

they showcased their talent with the bat. The duo were united at the crease in the 17th over and separated in the 34th. ShamyI had first shared a 78-run opening stand with Muhammad Akhlaq (31, 44b, 4x4s), while Kamran Ghulam departed early.

ShamyI brought up his century in style with consecutive sixes against Mohammad Hasnain in the 29th over before falling for 111 off 93 balls (11x4s, 4x6s). Saad fell for 112 off 102 balls and struck 11 fours and four sixes in his outing. Abdul Samad (25, 25,

1x4, 2x6s) and Mubasir (21, 17b, 1x4, 1x6) contributed enough to stretch the score well beyond the 300-run mark.

For the Greens, Shaheen, Faheem and Shadab picked up two wickets each, while Mehran and Hasnain accounted for one

batter each.

Scores in Brief
Final – Sparco Paints Pakistan Gold beat Rivaj Pakistan Greens by 101 runs at Multan Cricket Stadium

Pakistan Gold 340 all out, 50 overs (Saad Khan 112, ShamyI Hussain 111, Muhammad Akhlaq 31, Abdul Samad 25, Mubasir Khan 21; Faheem Ashraf 2-40, Shadab Khan 2-45, Naseem Shah 2-59)

Pakistan Greens 239 all out, 37.3 overs (Saad Baig 67, Omair Bin Yousuf 44, Faheem Ashraf 38 not out, Naseem Shah 31, Fakhar Zaman 31; Shaheen Shah Afridi 7-36)

Player of the match – Shaheen Shah Afridi (Pakistan Gold)

Best batter and player of the tournament – Fakhar Zaman (260 runs, 1 wicket)

Best bowler of the tournament – Shaheen Shah Afridi (9 wickets)

Best wicketkeeper of the tournament–Saad Baig (170 runs, 5 Dismissals)

Tournament results: (All matches at Multan Cricket Stadium)

11 August – Pakistan Greens beat Pakistan Whites by five wickets

12 August – Pakistan Blues beat Pakistan Gold by six wickets

13 August – Pakistan Whites beat Pakistan Blues by six runs

14 August – Pakistan Greens beat Pakistan Gold by 128 runs

15 August – Pakistan Greens beat Pakistan Blues by 192 runs

16 August – Pakistan Gold beat Pakistan Whites by five wickets

18 August – Final – Pakistan Gold beat Pakistan Greens by 101 runs

PCB to host Sri Lanka and England for T-20 and One Day International Tri-Cricket Series and Tests Matches

ASim Tanveer

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Cricket Board will host Sri Lanka and England men's cricket teams for bilateral and tri-series from 9 October to 21 November, it was announced today.

Sri Lanka will arrive on 4 October to feature in a three-match T20I series, which will be played in Rawalpindi from 9 to 13 October. Following the T20I series, England will arrive in Pakistan to take part in an ODI tri-series, scheduled to be played in Rawalpindi and Lahore from 18 to 31 October.

At the conclusion of the tri-series, Sri Lanka will feature in a three-day match in Islamabad from 4 to 6 November. Pakistan and Sri Lanka will then compete in a two-match Test series, which will be part of the ICC World Test Championship 2025-27. The first Test will be played at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium in Rawalpindi from 9 to 13 November, while the second Test will take place at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore from 17 to 21 November.

This will be the second Test series hosted by Pakistan in the current 2025-27 ICC World Test Championship cycle after South Africa visited Pakistan for a two-Test series in October last year.

The forthcoming ODI tri-series will be the second tri-series in this format hosted by Pakistan in as many years. Last year, ahead of the ICC Champions Trophy 2025, Pakistan hosted New Zealand and South Africa for an ODI tri-series in February.

The tri-series will begin with Pakistan taking on Sri Lanka at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on Sunday, 18 October. The hosts will face England in the second match at the same venue on Tuesday, 20 October, while Sri Lanka and England will

meet in the third match at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on Thursday, 22 October.

All three sides will then move to Lahore, where Pakistan will face England in the fourth ODI of the tri-series at Gaddafi Stadium on Sunday, 25 October. Pakistan and Sri Lanka will meet in the fifth match at the same venue on Tuesday, 27 October.

Sri Lanka and England will take part in the sixth match of the tournament at Gaddafi Stadium on Thursday, 29 October, while the top two sides will meet in the final at the same venue on Saturday, 31 October.

Schedule:
Sri Lanka tour to Pakistan (T20Is and Test series)

9 October – First T20I at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, Rawalpindi

11 October – Second T20I at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, Rawalpindi

13 October – Third T20I at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, Rawalpindi

4-6 November – Three-day match, Islamabad

9-13 November – First Test at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, Rawalpindi

17-21 November – Second Test at Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore

One Day International Cricket Tri-Series (England, Pakistan, Sri Lanka)

18 October – Pakistan v Sri Lanka, Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, Rawalpindi

20 October – Pakistan v England, Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, Rawalpindi

22 October – Sri Lanka v England, Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, Rawalpindi

25 October – Pakistan v England, Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore

27 October – Pakistan v Sri Lanka, Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore

29 October – Sri Lanka v England, Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore

31 October – Tri-series final, Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore

Shrapnel Over Moscow: The Inhuman Calculus of Ukraine's Drone War

Continued from Page 4

they must be prosecuted regardless of the perpetrator's alliances.

Ukraine's drone campaign, armed with shrapnel, is not merely a tactical innovation—it is a moral abomination. It demands condemnation, investigation, and accountability.

Conclusion: Humanity or Barbarism

The drone war over Moscow is not about military victory. It is about the erosion of humanity. By deliberately targeting civilians with shrapnel, Ukraine has crossed a line that cannot be justified under any pretext.

War will ultimately be judged

not by territory gained or lost, but by the lives destroyed and the humanity preserved. The pensioner in Ramenskoe, the wounded in Podolsk, the injured near the MKAD—all bear witness to the inhuman calculus of this drone campaign.

In the end, the choice is stark: to uphold the principles of humanity, or to descend into barbarism. Ukraine's use of shrapnel-laden drones has chosen the latter. The world must not remain silent.

The writer is a retired Group Captain of PAF. He is a columnist, analyst and TV talk show host, who has authored 16 books on current affairs, including ten on China

Strategic Importance of the Makkah Mutual Defense Agreement

Continued from Page 4

economic significance because it strengthens defence cooperation, potentially provides access to Saudi financial resources, and adds Turkey's advanced, NATO-compatible military capabilities and expertise to Islamabad's partnerships. It builds on the Pakistan-Saudi Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement signed in September 2025, which similarly treated an attack on either country as an attack on both and covered all military means. The trilateral pact is also a source of national pride in Pakistan, particularly following the 19-day Marka-e-Haq conflict with India from April 22 to May 10, 2025, which was a decisive Pakistani military victory despite India's

greater size, raising Pakistan's international standing and public confidence in its armed forces. Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir's assertion that Pakistan's military is among the world's strongest, together with Saudi Arabia and Turkey's decision to enter a mutual-defence framework with Pakistan, is an evidence of Pakistan's military capability, professional strength, and strategic value as a defence partner.

The Mecca Joint Defence Agreement represents a fundamental shift in the regional security architecture, as it creates a powerful bloc of Sunni Muslim powers that are allied with the United States, and it signals a new era of strategic cooperation among the three countries that is driven by

shared concerns over the growing chaos in the Middle East and the assertive role of Israel in the region. The three nations share growing concerns over an increasingly assertive Israel, and they are united in their desire to contain these threats and maintain stability in a region that has been plagued by conflict and instability. Saudi Arabia, which has faced repeated attacks from Iran and its allies, has been actively seeking to diversify its defence partnerships, and the agreement with Turkey and Pakistan provides the kingdom with a robust security guarantee that complements its existing alliances. Turkey, despite being a NATO member, has pursued an independent foreign policy and has sought to expand its influence

in the Muslim world, and the agreement with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan aligns with Ankara's vision of establishing a broader regional strategic platform. Pakistan, meanwhile, has long sought to avoid becoming militarily entangled in the Iran war, instead opting to try to mediate with Iran, but the agreement provides Islamabad with a framework for collective defence that does not necessarily require it to take unilateral military action. The agreement is purely defensive in nature and is not directed against any third country, but it nonetheless sends a powerful message to potential aggressors that an attack on any of the three signatories will be met with a unified and overwhelming response. The pact

further cements a burgeoning grouping of major Sunni Muslim powers, and it has the potential to reshape the balance of power in the region by creating a formidable military alliance that can project power and deter aggression. The signing of the agreement in Mecca, at the Al-Safa Palace, under the patronage of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, adds a layer of religious legitimacy to the alliance and reinforces the idea that the three nations are united not only by strategic interests but also by their shared Islamic faith and their commitment to the protection of the holy sites. The agreement is a clear manifestation of the shared commitment of the three countries to further promote coop-

eration and collaboration in all areas of defence cooperation, and it represents a significant step forward in the long-standing historical ties, strong ties of brotherhood and Islamic solidarity, shared strategic interests, and long-standing defence cooperation that have long united the three nations. As the Middle East continues to grapple with unprecedented levels of conflict and instability, the Mecca Joint Defence Agreement stands as a beacon of hope for a more secure and prosperous future, and it demonstrates that when Muslim nations unite in pursuit of common goals, they can achieve remarkable things that benefit not only their own peoples but the entire region and beyond.

China's Fusion Breakthrough: Death Knell for the Oil Age

Continued from Page 4

Europe, Japan, South Korea, India and Russia remain deeply involved in fusion research, while ITER represents a vast multinational effort. Fusion is consequently becoming a technological competition involving several different scientific pathways. This competition could ultimately prove more consequential than competition for another oilfield.

Modern strategic geography rests heavily upon fossil fuels. The Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, pipelines crossing Eurasia, LNG terminals and maritime transportation routes possess enormous importance because interruption of energy

supplies can cripple economies. Major powers therefore devote military, diplomatic and financial resources to protecting access to energy and the routes through which it moves.

Commercial fusion could gradually change this equation. If countries eventually become capable of manufacturing enormous quantities of reliable electricity domestically from fusion, their dependence upon distant oilfields and vulnerable transportation corridors would decline. Hormuz and other chokepoints would remain important to world trade, but their capacity to threaten the entire global energy system could diminish.

The greatest economic shock would fall upon countries heavily dependent upon hydrocarbons. Governments whose budgets, exports and foreign-exchange earnings rely substantially upon oil and gas would confront declining demand and potentially lower prices. Those that convert today's petroleum wealth into education, technology, manufacturing and diversified investment could survive and prosper. Those that remain overwhelmingly dependent upon extracting hydrocarbons could face profound structural adjustment.

If fusion eventually becomes reliable and economical, inexpensive electricity could power

massive desalination plants, produce hydrogen and synthetic fuels, electrify transportation and industrial processes, support cleaner steel production, operate enormous AI data centers and potentially enable large-scale carbon removal. Instead of humanity simply dividing today's energy market differently, the total amount of useful energy available to civilization could expand dramatically.

For developing countries, that could be transformational. Energy poverty restricts industry, agriculture, healthcare, education, water availability and technological progress. Abundant electricity could remove one of the most persistent

constraints upon economic development and provide poorer societies opportunities that historically required access to coal, oil or gas.

In a fusion age, strategic advantage could increasingly belong to countries possessing scientific talent, superconducting technology, advanced materials, artificial intelligence, plasma-control expertise, precision manufacturing and intellectual property.

Economic power could gradually migrate from nations fortunate enough to possess hydrocarbons beneath their soil toward nations capable of manufacturing sophisticated energy systems above it.

The Chinese direction is unmistakable. EAST's long-duration confinement, the 2026 density breakthrough, the enormous superconducting magnet, BEST's scheduled 2027 completion and China's decision to elevate fusion within its national industrial strategy collectively demonstrate a progression from understanding fusion toward engineering fusion. That progression should command the attention of every hydrocarbon-dependent economy.

The oil age will not end tomorrow, nor will fusion automatically replace every existing energy source. But technological revolutions rarely announce precisely when an established

economic order has reached its peak. They advance experiment by experiment until the economics suddenly begin changing.

China has not yet sounded the death knell for the oil age. But its laboratories are demonstrating that an alternative energy order is becoming scientifically imaginable and increasingly technologically tangible. The bell has not yet tolled for oil—but China may already be forging it.

The writer is Press Secretary to the President (Rtd), Former Press Minister, Embassy of Pakistan to France, Former Press Attaché to Malaysia and former MD, SRBC. He is living in Michigan, USA

ECC Meeting

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, chairing a meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) at the Finance Division.



Photo: PID

Ethiopia, Pakistan agree to boost agricultural cooperation

 Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on Wednesday agreed to further strengthen their bilateral cooperation in the agriculture sector to enhance trade and investment and promote technology transfer, food security and livestock development.

The discussion to this end was held at the Ministry of National Food Security and Research, Islamabad between H. E. Dr. Oumer Hussien Oba, Ambassador of Ethiopia, and the Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research, H. E. Rana Tanveer Hussain.

The meeting explored various avenues for increasing agricultural cooperation, including an agro-pact to insti-



tutionalize collaboration and enable the exchange of knowledge and expertise between the two countries' agricultural institutions.

The Ambassador highlighted the potential of agricultural cooperation between

Ethiopia and Pakistan, detailing the agrarian character of Ethiopia's economy and the priority attached to the sector by the Government of Ethiopia.

He presented Ethiopia's Green Legacy Initiative as

a holistic programme to promote sustainable development through agricultural growth, food security, climate resilience and a green economy.

Ethiopia can share its expertise in the Green Legacy Ini-

ative with Pakistan, he said, while inviting Pakistani agricultural entrepreneurs to explore investment opportunities in Ethiopia's agricultural sector.

The Ambassador also briefed the Federal Minister on Ethiopia's preparations to host COP32, which will take place in Addis Ababa in 2027.

The Federal Minister highlighted Pakistan's expertise in agricultural research, modern farming technologies, agricultural machinery, irrigation, livestock development and agro-processing, and expressed Pakistan's readiness to share its experience and technical know-how with Ethiopia.

He noted that the two countries could significantly expand cooperation in crop productivity, seed development, climate-resilient agriculture and mechanization.

Tarar announces major diesel price relief following PM's directives

 City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaulah Tarar on Wednesday said successful negotiations with oil refineries had paved the way for a reduction of around Rs32 per litre in diesel prices, providing major relief to the public.

Speaking alongside Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik, he said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had chaired a meeting earlier in the day with the petroleum minister, petroleum secretary and relevant officials and directed negotiations with oil refineries to ensure that possible relief was passed on to consumers.

Tarar said the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) would announce the reduction shortly,



adding that the petroleum minister had made considerable efforts to make the negotiations successful.

He said a significant portion of

diesel was refined and produced locally, adding that the reduction would particularly benefit farmers, goods transport and public transport,

which rely on diesel.

The minister said the government was aware of the difficulties faced by the people amid rising global oil prices following the war situation.

He said the government had provided subsidies and targeted subsidies whenever possible and spent Rs130 billion to prevent petrol prices from increasing during difficult circumstances.

Tarar termed the diesel price reduction a major relief for the people, saying it would reduce their burden and have positive effects on the wider economy.

He said the prime minister's meeting on the issue earlier in the day had resulted in the relief, adding that further good news would come in the coming days.

Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh Calls for Education Modernisation and National Consensus

 Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Investment Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh called for modernising Pakistan's education system, developing market-oriented skills, and building national consensus to achieve sustainable economic growth. Addressing the opening session of the International Education Summit & Expo 2026 at COMSTECH Secretariat, held under the theme "Promoting Global Education for Sustainable Growth & Economic Prosperity," he described education as one of the most powerful tools for development and poverty reduction.

He said rapid advances in technology, digitalisation, and AI were making digital literacy, employable



skills, and entrepreneurship increasingly essential for youth, highlighting that OIC countries' youth popula-

tion is projected to reach around 427 million — a potential source of innovation if properly educated. He urged

institutions to build practical and technical skills alongside communication, leadership, teamwork, critical thinking, and resilience, while noting millions of Pakistani children remain out of school.

Citing China's development experience, he said education, development, and national consensus drive economic transformation, urging Pakistan to place education at the center of its national strategy. On investment, he stressed that peace, stability, and policy continuity are essential to attract investors, reiterating government efforts to simplify regulations and improve ease of doing business. The summit concluded with exhibition visits showcasing university programmes for international students.

Published by: Almass Ayoub Sabir from Zero Point Printers Rawalpindi

Finance Minister Chairs ECC Meeting

 Commerce Desk

Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, today chaired a meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet, held at the Finance Division.

The ECC considered a summary submitted by the Ministry of National Food Security and Research seeking permission to call international tenders for export of 108,000 MT of sugar lying with Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP), as remaining stock from the 300,000 MT sugar imported last

year on recommendation of Steering Committee on Sugar, constituted with the approval of Cabinet last year. The international tender process will strictly follow the PPRA Rules 2004.

The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research, Rana Tanveer Hussain; Federal Minister for Investment, Mr. Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh; Advisor to the Prime Minister for Industries and Production, Mr. Haroon Akhtar Khan; along with federal secretaries and senior officials from the relevant ministries and divisions.(Media Wing)

Pakistan Navy reviews maritime threats, operational readiness



 City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy's Command and Staff Conference, chaired by Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf, reviewed traditional and non-traditional maritime threats and the security situation at strategic choke points.

During the conference, Admiral Ashraf stressed the need to maintain the Pakistan Navy's continuous war preparedness amid evolving maritime security challenges.

He said the acquisition of modern weapons and advanced technology

was essential to effectively address emerging threats in the maritime domain.

The conference also highlighted the Pakistan Navy's role in promoting regional peace and stability and ensuring maritime security.

The naval chief was briefed on the Pakistan Navy's ongoing and future plans, including measures aimed at strengthening its operational capabilities.

Admiral Ashraf expressed satisfaction with the operational preparedness of the Pakistan Navy to defend the country's maritime frontiers.

Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Saeed Al-Malki pays farewell call on Nawaz Sharif and CM Maryam Nawaz



 Bureau Report

LAHORE,: Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Saeed Al-Malki paid a farewell call on Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif.

The Saudi ambassador was warmly received upon his arrival at the Chief Minister's Office.

PML-N President Muhammad

Nawaz Sharif and Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif appreciated Ambassador Nawaf bin Saeed Al-Malki's diplomatic services for Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

The Saudi envoy described his stay in Pakistan as memorable and thanked the hosts for their warm and sincere hospitality.

He also expressed gratitude for the cordial welcome and hospitality extended to him during his tenure in Pakistan.

President calls for stronger compliance mechanisms to ensure effective relief to taxpayers

 City Desk

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has called for stronger mechanisms to monitor compliance with the decisions and recommendations of Federal Tax Ombudsmen, stressing that relief provided to complainants should be meaningful and effective.

The President made these remarks while talking to Federal Tax Ombudsman Mr. Zafar-ul-Haq Hijazi, who called on him at Aiwan-e-Sadr to present the Annual Report 2025.

He said the Federal Tax Ombudsman is playing an impor-

tant role in diagnosing, investigating, redressing and rectifying injustice caused by maladministration in the administration of federal tax laws.

The President also called for greater use of new technology tools to ensure expeditious resolution of complaints.

The President was informed that 37,160 fresh complaints were registered with the FTO during 2025, while 35,830 complaints and cases were disposed of. Refund claims in excess of Rs.13,000 million were also decided and the due amount paid to aggrieved taxpayers by the FBR.

Senator Saleem Mandviwalla was also present during the meeting.